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ABSTRACT

Although Latino youth have slightly lower rates of alcohol use than Anglo youth, evidence suggests that as Latinos acculturate their rates of use increase to match those of the Anglo adolescent population. In light of these cultural patterns, a study examined the reactions of young adult males of Latino origin to television beer and non-beer commercials in Spanish and English. Television is an important medium for the transmission of cultural values, while advertisements encourage specific behaviors stemming from the accepted cultural norms. In this study, there was an interaction between advertisement type (beer vs. non-beer) and language presentation (Spanish vs. English). A total of 24 ads were used with 38 subjects, all Latino males between 12 and 18 (most were first or second generation Mexican Americans). Results indicated that Latino males liked the Spanish language non-beer commercials best and Spanish beer commercials the least of all commercials seen. English beer commercials were preferred over English non-beer commercials. Qualitative evidence suggested that these Latino youth responded negatively to advertisers' portrayals of Latina females and Latino alcohol use. The reasons for their negative reactions are probably quite complex, having to do with portrayals inconsistent with traditional gender roles and, more generally, with inaccurate portrayals of the Latino culture. Education efforts that stress Latino cultural identity may, then, strengthen the disinclination of Latino youth to use alcohol. (Contains 1 figure, 1 table, and 21 references.) (Author/TB)

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Beer advertising to Latino youth: the effects of Spanish vs English language targeting.

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Abstract

Even though Latino youth have slightly lower rates of alcohol use than Anglo youth, evidence suggests that as Latinos acculturate their rates of use increase to match those of the Anglo adolescent population. In light of these cultural patterns we examined the reactions of young adult males of Latino origin to television beer and non-beer commercials in Spanish and English. Television in general is an important medium for the transmission of cultural values, while advertisements encourage specific behaviors stemming from the accepted cultural norms. It is important to look at these processes so we may shape interventions to have more reliable outcomes. In this study there was an interaction between advertisement type (beer vs non-beer) and language presentation (Spanish vs English). Latino males liked the Spanish language non-beer commercials the best and Spanish beer commercials the least of all commercials seen. English beer commercials were preferred over English non-beer commercials. Qualitative evidence suggested that these Latino youth responded negatively to advertisers' portrayals of Latina females and Latino alcohol use. Results were unaffected by acculturation covariates.

Introduction

Alcohol use among Latino youth, especially by Latino males, is a matter of serious concern. A 1993 report of the National Institutes of Health showed that alcohol is the drug of choice among high school seniors. Alcohol use rates vary according to subgroups. One group that seems to be especially at-risk is Latino males. While the USDHHS (1990) indicates that the prevalence of drinking is slightly lower for Latino youth than for Anglo youth, these data reflect total population estimates. If they are broken down to reveal gender differences, we would find that Latino males drink more heavily than Anglo males while Latinas drink less than Anglo females (Gilbert, 1989). One recent report (USDHHS, 1990) reveals lifetime rates of alcohol use of 53.3% and use in the last month of 18.9%. Certain types of Latino youth, however, such as school dropouts (Chavez & Swaim, 1992), show much higher rates.

It has been well documented that as Latino youth acculturate, their use of alcohol usually increases to match the level of the majority culture (Caetano, 1987). In light of this, it is important to explore the processes that underlie alcohol consumption in the Latino young adult population. It seems that television, being an agent for the transmission of culture, would be an important variable in understanding alcohol use change patterns. It is important therefore to examine cultural

influences, such as advertising, that may encourage increased consumption of alcohol among Latino youth.

During the 1980s, a trend toward customer-driven marketing led to greater emphasis on marketing segmentation, or developing a unique marketing program to reach prime prospects (Weinstein, 1987). Latinos as a group of consumers have substantial buying power (Swenson, 1990) and thus have become an important target market segment. Although the average personal income is low, the Latino tradition of la familia allows for resource pooling, therefore giving them greater buying power (Swenson, 1990). Moreover, the Latino population is growing rapidly. Current Census Bureau statistics estimate an 8.4% increase in the Latino population since 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992); predictions indicate that by the year 2020, Latinos will be the largest minority group in the nation.

Brewers are prominent among the top advertisers in the Latino market. For some time brewers have been targeting Latinos via advertising, promotions, scholarship programs and vendor opportunities. These efforts are evidently being noticed in the Latino community, which is increasingly consuming their products (Stuller, 1987). Philip Morris (Miller beers) and Anheuser-Busch (Budweiser beers) are in the top three advertisers to the Hispanic community with $13.1 and $8.6 million in spending respectively (Balkan, 1988). Adolph Coors falls in the top ten with $5.1 million spent in advertising (Balkan, 1988).

Television has become a particularly important advertising medium for Latinos due to their high rates of viewing compared to non-Latinos (Poppe, 1988). The availability of Spanish-language television generates a need for Spanish language advertising. However, it is important to recognize that there may be important variations within the Latino population which may influence their response to advertising. Latinos may not respond uniformly positively to Spanish language or culture-oriented messages. Deshpande, Hoyer and Donthu (1986), for instance, conducted research with a Mexican-American sample and found that consumer behaviors differ according to the strength of ethnic identification. Strong Latino Identifiers use Spanish media considerably more than Weak Latino identifiers. Strong Latino Identifiers were also more brand loyal, more likely to buy prestige brands, and more likely to buy brands advertised to their ethnic group than Weak Latino Identifiers.

Acculturation is the process of learning the values, norms, attitudes and behaviors of a host culture (Marín, et al, 1987). While some individuals choose to take on the ways of the host culture others choose to maintain the ways of their native or traditional culture. There are also bicultural individuals -those who learn both cultures and integrate them or use them interchangeably- and anomic individuals -those who reject both cultures (Oetting & Beauvais, 1991).

Since using Latino cultural context and Spanish language are important strategies that advertisers, brewing companies in particular, employ, it would be useful to test Deshpande's et al.'s (1986) claim for differential responses to Spanish and Anglo culture advertisements depending on degree of ethnic identification or acculturation. Of course, it is also necessary to compare beer to non-beer advertising as well, since results for one may not generalize to the other. For example, there is some evidence to suggest that Latinos, in general, tend to be less favorably disposed toward alcohol use than are Anglos, though this seems to change with greater acculturation (Caetano, 1987).

This study analyzes Latino young adult males' reactions to television beer advertising in Spanish and English to determine if cognitive responses to the commercials vary according to language, and topic of the advertisement. The main dependent variables are cognitive responses to messages in Spanish and English. Cognitive response is a method of thought listing, in which subjects write thoughts and feelings brought about by a message immediately after being exposed to it. The spontaneous thoughts elicited by audience members as they watch a commercial are primary mediators of effects of advertising on beliefs and attitudes about the advertised brand (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981).

Hypothesis #1:

Subjects will react more positively to Spanish language commercials than English language commercials.

These youth are part of a host culture which does not provide a constant influx of own-culture values and images. It would seem reasonable that any such presentation would be welcome. Research has shown that language is considered the most important tradition worth preserving among Latinos (Exter, 1985). It would also be reasonable to assume that persuasion techniques used specifically for Latinos, using Spanish language, would be more acceptable than those designed for the general population.

Research question:

What is the role of acculturation in influencing responses to Spanish and English language advertisements? Overall, one might expect less acculturated Latinos to be more responsive to advertising reflecting Spanish language and culture. However, a preference for advertisements reflecting Latino language and culture may characterize all but the most assimilated, Anglo-oriented Latinos. In addition, given Caetano's (1987) findings, we might expect more Anglo-acculturated Latinos to respond more positively to beer advertisements than less Anglo-acculturated Latinos.

Methods

Design

This experiment is a 2x2 within subjects (repeated measures) factorial study (beer advertisements vs. non-beer advertisements; Spanish language advertisements vs. English language advertisements). The advertisements were randomly sampled from weekday, prime time (6:00pm to 9:00pm) television programming and weekend daytime programming. The English language advertisements were sampled from the major networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) and the Spanish language advertisements were sampled from Univision. The advertisements were content analyzed and screened for cultural context so that English language advertisements were high in Anglo cultural content and the Spanish language advertisements were high in Latino cultural content. A total of eight Spanish-language beer ads, eight English-language beer ads, four Spanish-language non-beer ads and four English-language non-beer ads were used as the stimulus pool over the course of the study.

Each subject viewed three advertisements in Spanish and three advertisements in English (two beer and one non-beer in each language, with the beer responses pooled in the analysis), and wrote down their reactions. To avoid confounding results because of the placements of the advertisements, a Latin Squares table counterbalanced advertisement and language presentation order. However, the Spanish advertisements and the English advertisements were clustered together to reduce viewing demands

on subjects. Therefore subjects would view the three Spanish language commercials and then the three English language commercials or vice versa.

All documents were translated into Spanish by the researcher and then backtranslated into English. The backtranslation was done by a translator who had not seen the original English version and was not familiar with the scales. The translations were found to be reliable judging by the small number of errors made in the backtranslation.

Subjects

The subjects were all Latino males, 12 to 18 years of age. There were 38 subjects; 28 from a not-for-profit organization in a western inner city and 10 from a mid-sized western city, to increase variance in acculturation. The subjects were paid $8 to $10 for their participation. Since each subject appeared in each experimental condition, this within subjects design was equivalent in power to a between-subject design with 152 subjects.

Dependent measures

Subjects were asked to list their thoughts immediately after receiving a message stimulus. The thoughts were listed on the questionnaire under three headings: reactions to the people, reactions to the product and reactions to the commercial. Subjects were asked to remain silent for the duration of the

study so as to assure the answers would be independent from other subjects' opinions.

The responses for this study were coded into six categories, described below using criteria developed by Buchholz and Smith (1991) and Cacioppo, Harkins and Petty (1981).

1. Reactions to people in the commercial: These are people-related thoughts referring to the people or voice-over in the advertisement. Thoughts in this category include: (a) identification or evaluation of the attributes of the people in the advertisement, (b) comments about the portrayal of the people, (c) comments about the consequences of following the advice or behavior of the people, and (d) questions about the people.

2. Reactions to product advertised: These are product-related thoughts, or thoughts referring to the brand or product class. Thoughts in this category include: (a) identification or evaluation of the attributes of the product, (b) comments about the performance of the product, (c) comments about the consequences of using the product, (d) questions about the brand or product class, and (e) comments about the products' ability to solve a problem.

3. Reactions to the commercial: Message-related thoughts are thoughts that identify or evaluate "execution aspects" of the advertisement. Thoughts in this category include: (a) comments on the effectiveness of the advertisement, (b) comments about

interest in the advertisement, (c) questions about the advertisement, and (d) comments about attributes of the advertisement.

4. Reactions to advertisers: Source-related thoughts are thoughts about the credibility or effectiveness of the source of product information, namely the advertisers. Thoughts in this category include: (a) comments about the perceived expertise of the source, (b) comments about the perceived trustworthiness of the source, and (c) comments about the effectiveness of the source.

5. Comments about drinking: Thoughts in this category include: (a) comments on the personal like or dislike of the alcohol product, (b) comments about interest on the alcohol product, (c) questions about the alcohol product, and (d) comments about attributes of the alcohol product.

6. Counterarguments: This category includes negative comments that reflect lack of persuasive intent. Comments in this category were double coded (i.e. "that stunt is not possible" would be coded as a negative comment about the commercial and a counterargument).

After being coded into a category, the open ended responses were categorized further by polarity, as positive, neutral or negative comments. Intercoder reliabilities were .99 for number of thoughts, .84 for polarity and .80 for category. Because of the small number of comments per category, analysis of individual

categories could not be reliably performed. Therefore all categories were collapsed into net total polarity of comments (total positive minus total negative) for each of the four treatment conditions: English language beer, English language non-beer, Spanish language beer and Spanish language non-beer commercial.

Measures of acculturation

Acculturation is a continuous variable and is incorporated in the study as a covariate. The measurement of acculturation was administered by questionnaire before the advertisements were shown. Two different scales were used, one developed by Oetting and Beauvais (1991) to measure acculturation on multiple continua, and the other by Marín, et al. (1987). The Marín, et al. (1987) scale was adapted for orthogonal measurement (as per Oetting & Beauvais, 1991), by dividing every question into two (i.e. instead of "Do you speak Spanish better than English" (=1) to "English better than Spanish" (=5), the question read: "How well do you speak Spanish?" (Fluently=1 to Not at all=4) and "How well do you speak English?).

A factor analysis of all of the acculturation items yielded six factors. Two of the factors consisted of items from the Oetting and Beauvais (1991) scale (lifestyle Latino, lifestyle Anglo) and other four factors contained items from the Marín (1987) scale (Spanish language, English language, Latino social involvement and Anglo social involvement.

It appears from the results of the Marin scale that most subjects are bicultural. For the language component of acculturation 74% of subjects were above the midpoint for Spanish, while 87% were over the midpoint for English. For the social component of acculturation, 95% of subjects socialize with Latinos, while over 77% socialize with Anglos. On the Oetting and Beauvais (1991) items for "living the Latino way of life", 79% of subjects reporting "a lot" or "some", versus "living the Anglo way of life", where only a little over 12% reporting "a lot" or "some".

Results

Thirty-eight Latino males participated in the study. The average age was 13.6 with a 12 to 18 age range. Ten participants were first generation Mexican American, 17 were second generation Mexican American and 6 were third generation Latino (of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent)[1].

All but one subject reported having enough money to buy food "always" or "most of the time" and 68% reported having enough money to do fun things "always" or "most of the time". Thirty four percent had never been drunk and 37% had been drunk at least once.

Main effects and interactions

A covariance model was used to test main effects and interactions controlling for session and subject within session factors. The location effect was significant ($F(7,111)=8.37$, $p<.001$) and that variation was controlled in the model. There were two significant treatment effects in the model: a beer effect ($F(1,111)=5.44$, $p<.05$) and a language by beer interaction effect ($F(1,111)=14.38$, $p<.001$).

The mean total polarity for English language beer advertisements was 1.15, sd 4.72. (The large standard deviation relative to the mean was due to substracting the negatives from the positives to obtain the polarity score). Mean total polarity for English language non-beer advertisements was .24, sd 2.11. Mean total polarity for Spanish language beer advertisements was -.79, sd 5.47. Mean total polarity for Spanish language non-beer advertisements was 1.66, sd 2.23 (see Figure 1). Subjects reacted most positively to Spanish language non-beer advertisements, and most negatively to Spanish language beer advertisements. They also liked English language beer advertisements more than English language non-beer advertisements.

-- Figure 1 about here --

It was expected that respondents would react more positively, in general, to the Spanish language advertisements than the English language advertisements. The hypothesis was supported for non-beer advertisements but it was not supported for beer advertisements.

The participants' cultural affiliation appeared to be important in their reactions to all of the commercials. Responses to the non-beer commercials followed in the predicted direction given the overall high levels of Latino identification in each group. However reactions to the beer commercials did not follow the predicted direction. From the results it appears that the negative effects of feeling targeted to buy beer were much stronger than the positive feelings associated with hearing Spanish or seeing a Latina. For example, there were more negative comments such as the examples in table 1, than there were positive comments such as "...the way it sounded was kind of fun to listen to" or "The chicks looked good". In essence, the targeting seems to have caused a boomerang effect where presenting beer products in a more familiar way (i.e. language and models), fostered negative reactions rather than positive ones.

The youth seemed particularly critical about the portrayal of Latinas in the beer commercials. Even though the Latino youth had positive comments about the models in the English beer commercials, they reacted negatively to the presentation of similarly, and more culturally appropriate, beautiful women in Spanish language beer commercials. A number of comments reflected a negative attitude about having Latinas portrayed as cheap, easy, and involved in a bad environment. The youth did not accept the culture portrayed in the Spanish language beer commercials as

representative of their own, especially when it came to the portrayal of Latinas.

Discussion

The Latino young adults liked the Spanish non-beer advertisements the best of all four conditions, while they liked Spanish beer advertisements least. In fact, the Spanish language beer advertisements were the only ones that yielded more negative than positive responses. The quality of the production of both was comparable, eliminating the factor of poor production as an explanation for the difference. The youth clearly disliked beer commercials in Spanish while liking the English beer commercials.

That these youth react negatively to Spanish language beer commercials is interesting. These reactions may be indicative of underlying ambivalence in Latino culture about alcohol use. However, the nature of the ambivalence may be complex. One the one hand one may interpret the negative comments about Latinas, as they appeared in the beer commercials, as a negative reaction to portrayal inconsistent with traditional gender roles. The traditional Latina would not drink, at least not so publicly, and would not behave as provocatively as the Latinas portrayed in most of the beer commercials. On the other hand, the youth had negative comments that were more general (not just about Latinas) in criticizing the inaccurate portrayal of Latino culture in the

beer commercials. They both appeared to contribute to the main findings.

Education efforts that stress Latino cultural identity may, then, strengthen the disinclination of Latino youth to use alcohol. Similarly, beer advertising clearly is the one type of advertising that does not benefit from being placed in Latino language and cultural context. Further research efforts to examine this possibility would be most useful. Open-ended focus group discussion might also provide a clearer picture of why subjects responded the way they did.

One factor that was hoped would provide some explanatory power is acculturation. It seems, however, that most of the subjects were bicultural or similarly comfortable in both their native and their host culture, in terms of language and social involvement[2]. Because of this, we were unable to determine if acculturation levels mediated their responses to the advertisements. It would be interesting to explore experimentally whether advertisements with Spanish or English language programming triggers one or the other cultural identity, using a between subjects design.

Clearly, however, this study's results suggest that Latino adolescent males, while generally preferring Spanish-language and culture-oriented advertising, responded negatively to Spanish-language beer advertising, probably because of the interplay of cultural and gender roles associated with alcohol use. The

results suggest that interventions that highlight the intent of beer advertisers in Spanish would further polarize the youths' views as well as provide more information to counter the English language advertisements. Furthermore, the results suggest that interventions placed in a Spanish-language and cultural context may be more powerful in changing alcohol use behaviors.

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Footnotes

1. First generation refers to subjects born in México. Second generation refers to subjects born in the U.S. whith one or both parents born in México. Third generation subjects and their parents were born in the U.S., with grandparents born in México (Cuellar, et al, 1980).

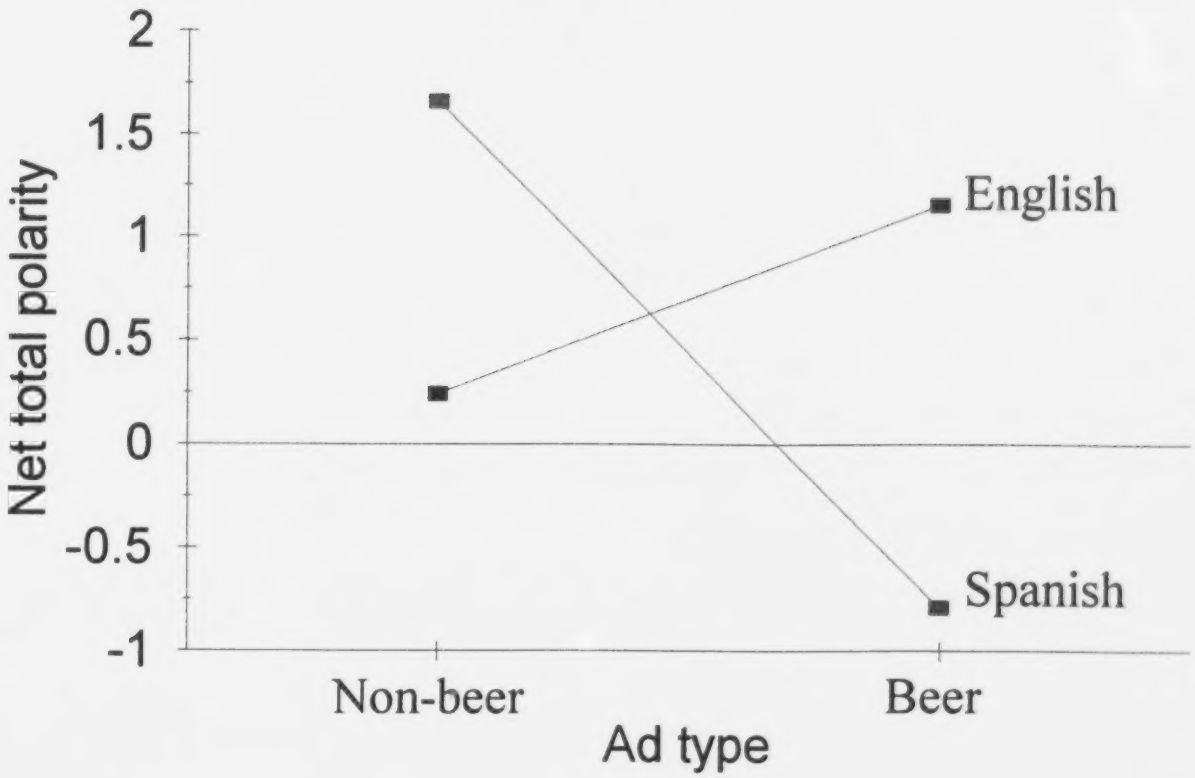
2. We did find valuable evidence that acculturation needs to be considered from a number of perspectives. Using the orthogonal perspective, that is that people can identify with more than one culture, we foiund that these youth were very comfortable with equal facility in the Spanish and English language. From Marín, et al.'s (1987) multidimensional perspective it was evident thatsome of these Latino youth were more Latino identified socially while being more Anglo identified in terms of language.

Table 1

Examples of negative comments from cognitive response questions

1. "Man, I think that commercial was stupid dissing our culture with alcohol"
2. "Me enojo poquito porque usan a gente mexicana, usan a gente casandose con cervezas en la mano, teniendo pura felicidad! pero eso no es lo que trae, trae puros problemas" [I get a little angry because they use Mexican people with beers in hand, being joyful! but that's not what beer gives you, it brings only troubles]
3. "Se ve que estan teniendo un buen tiempo, pero no enseñan lo que pasa después todos borrachos y peleando" [You can see they're having a good time, but they don't show what happens after, everyone drunk and fighting]
4. "Beer commercials try to make it seem like the product is good and that makes me just hate the product even more"

Figure 1


2
1.5
1
0.5
0
-0.5
-1
Net total polarity
English
Spanish
Non-beer
Beer
Ad type